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Political activity in Chile cited

CIA funds linked to Jesuit in Latin America

By James H. Newman
Daily News Religion Writer

A Belgian Jesuit who directed spending of millions of dollars on social-action projects in Latin America in the 1960s used money from a source widely identified with the CIA, a new book says.

The Rev. Roger Vekemans accepted several million dollars from the International Development Foundation, one of 11 organizations named in 1967 as channels for CIA money.

Father Vekemans spent the money to organize grass-roots support in Chile for Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei, according to the book by sociologist David E. Mutchler.

The Belgian priest left Chile last year after Socialist Salvador Allende was elected president. He tried unsuccessfully to get into Venezuela, Mutchler said, and is now in Bogota, Colombia.

FATHER Vekemans' Jesuit superior, the Rev. Francisco Ivern, admitted that the Belgian priest had taken money from the foundation.

In an interview with Daily News Rome correspondent George Weller, he said he did not know whether Father Vekemans knew about the possible CIA tie before 1967.

He called linking Father Vekemans with the CIA a "smear." He denied the funds were put to political uses and said Father Vekemans had gone to Bogota "because it is easier to work out of Colombia than today's Chile."

Father Ivern, stationed in Rome, directs Jesuit activities in Latin America.

DESAL, a "screening agency" through which Father Vekemans spent as much as \$80 million annually in American and West German money, "has never been church-related," Father Ivern said.

"Father Vekemans is under our jurisdiction for spiritual and moral matters," he said, "but we do not attempt to check on all his financial sources."

MUTCHLER'S book, "The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America," is set for publication by Praeger in July.

In it is a 1964 memorandum from Father Vekemans to a fellow Jesuit, the Rev. Renato Poblete, in which the Belgian priest mentions receiving money from the foundation.

The projects funded covered Father Vekemans' entire organizing effort in Chile, Mutchler says, including (according to the memorandum) "formation of university students" with a view to their advising "base movements."

George Truitt and Edward Cohen, vice presidents of the foundation, "definitely support

Christian democracy and (Eduardo) Frei," the Vekemans memorandum said.

The International Development Foundation was named along with the National Student Assn. and other organizations in February, 1967, as having received money from CIA sources.

THE LATE Rep. L. Mendel Rivers (D-S.C.) and Rep. William Bates (D-Mass.) of the

House Armed Services Committee, confirmed that NSA received CIA money.

Father Vekemans' "screening agency," as Father Ivern called it, also took money from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Ford Foundation and the West German government and West German Roman Catholic bishops. This money was spent on projects throughout Latin America.